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The Appointment of Deacons:

NOTES FROM THE SOUTHWARK MINUTE BOOK, 1719-1802.

THE following extracts from the Minute Book of the Southwark Church, which met first in Goat Lane and then in Carter Lane, were sent to me by Mr. E. A. Gurney-Smith, of Sevenoaks, a descendant of William Lepard, Junior, who was probably responsible for making them.* The Church came into existence in 1719 when, following the death of Benjamin Stinton, there was a split in the old Southwark Church, of which Benjamin Keach had been pastor. John Gill became the first minister of the new church and, as the notes record, was followed in 1773 by John Rippon.

It is interesting to notice the method by which deacons were chosen and the use of phrases such as "ordination and setting apart" and "ordained and installed into office." It will be seen that in 1777 the newly elected deacons were given "the right hand of fellowship"; that in 1791 a proposal that those chosen "be initiated into their office by laying on of hands" was rejected; but that in 1803 a group of deacons, which included Andrew Fuller's friend, William Burls, were "set apart by Prayer and laying on of Hands." Rippon continued minister till his death in 1836.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

1719 Nov. 17—

Agreed that on Thursday Nov. 26 the Church should meet together and after some time spent in Prayer, 4 Deacons be chosen to take upon them the administration of the affairs of the Church.

Nov. 26—

Being the day appointed for Election of Deacons, the Church met together and after some time spent in Prayer, chose Thos. Stone, John Jones, John Smith and Thos. Crosby to the office of Deacon.

1724 April 21—

Agreed that Tuesday next being the 28th of this inst. be kept in fasting and Prayer for the nomination and choice of two Deacons.

* Mr. Gurney-Smith also sent me a small treasurer's account book relating to the Carter Lane Church and covering the years 1824-28. It was kept first by Mr. Benjamin Lepard, one of the deacons elected in 1802, and from July, 1826 by a Mr. Evans. Enclosed in it is a list of the contributors to a fund of £411 12s. 6d. raised in 1824-25 for the repair of the Carter Lane Meeting House, for the repayment of monies owing to Mr. Burls and for the law expenses arising from the handing over to the Church by John Rippon, of Almshouses erected in 1803.

- April 28—
Being the day appointed for the nomination and choice of two Deacons the Church accordingly met and after some time spent in Prayer and a Word of Direction given respecting the nature of that office and the qualifications of persons for it, the Church proceeded to the nomination of four Persons viz. Bro. Turner, Bro. Deale, Bro. Kelly and Bro. Whorley out of which the two former were chosen by a majority.
- 1727 May 16—
It was agreed that the 30th of this instant be appointed a day of prayer for the ordination and setting apart of Bro. Deal and Bro. Turner to the office of Deacons in this Church which was done accordingly.
- 1741 July 10—
This being a Meeting of Prayer appointed by the Church for the choice of Deacons Bro. Anderson, Bro. Sharp, Bro. Davis and Bro. Davenport were elected into that office and Friday the 24th of this instant was fixed for the installment of 'em into it.
- 1741 June 24—
The 4 Deacons Bro. Anderson, Bro. Sharp, Bro. Davis and Bro. Davenport were ordained and installed into that office.
- 1743 May 2—
Upon the dismissal of Bro. Anderson, a motion was made to choose another Deacon in his Room and Bro. Lepard being nominated was unanimously chosen and Bro. Davis and Bro. Davenport were appointed to acquaint him with it and to desire his acceptance and this day fortnight is appointed to lay the affair before the Church in general and to install him into his office.
- May 15—
Lord's day. The Church being stayed it was reported that Bro. Lepard had been chosen into the Office of Deacon at the last Church Meeting and both Brethren and Sisters were desired to signify their assent to it which was unanimously done and accordingly Thursday May 26th was appointed for the ordination of him on which day the Church met and he was ordained into his office.
- 1751 March 11—
The next Church Meeting was appointed to begin at 3 o'clock precisely for the choice of two Deacons, Prayer being to be exercised on the occasion.
- April 8—
The affair of fixing a time for the choice of Deacons was postponed to a consideration of the Church after next breaking of Bread.
- April 14—
It was agreed that Monday fortnight be appointed to spend some time in prayer for the choice of 2 Deacons to begin at 3 o'clock.
- April 29—
The Church met together and having spent some time in prayer proceeded to the nomination and choice of two Deacons when Bro. Ribright and Bro. Robinson were chosen and that day 6 weeks was appointed for the said Brethren's answer and the installment of 'em into their office.
- June 10—
The Church met according to appointment and having recognized the choice of Bro. Ribright and Bro. Robinson to the office of Deacons and they being called upon to signify their acceptance which they did,

were solemnly ordained into and invested with the said office and the whole was concluded with Prayer and a Sermon on that occasion.

1769 March 27—

Agreed that this day fortnight be appointed to spend some time in prayer for the choice of three Deacons to begin at 3 o'clock.

April 24—

The Pastor having declared the Reasons why the Agreement of the last Church Meeting in regard to the choice of Deacons had been passed by and after further consideration it was proposed and agreed that this day fortnight be appointed to spend some time in prayer for direction in the choice of two Deacons to begin at 3 o'clock.

May 7—

Lord's Day. After the Ordinance had been administered the Pastor acquainted the Church with their Resolut at the last Church Meeting in regard to the choice of two more Deacons and desired if they acquiesced thereto that they would signify the same by the lifting up of their Hands which was unanimously agreed to.

May 8—

The Church met together and having spent some time in prayer, proceeded to the nomination and choice of Deacons when Bro. Warne and Bro. Button were chosen and that day fortnight was appointed for the said Brethren's Answer and the installment of 'em into their office.

1771 Oct. 13—

Dr. Gill died.

1773 Nov. 11—

Mr. Rippon ordained.

Decr. 16—

It was proposed and agreed that on Wednesday next this Church do meet to spend some time in Prayer for direction in the choice of Deacons to begin at 3 o'clock.

Decr. 19—

Lord's Day Evg. the Church being stayed the affair of the choice of Deacons was reconsidered when it was the unanimous determination of the Church that there should be 3 of the Brethren chosen to the office of Deacons amongst us on Wednesday next.

Decr. 22—

Some time having been spent in prayer, the Church proceeded to the nomination and choice of Deacons when the Brethren Flight, Sharp and Carrole were chosen and the next Church Meeting in course was appointed for the said Brethren's answer and the installment of them into their office.

1774 Jany. 10—

Brethren Carrol and Sharp having accepted the call of the Church to the office of Deacons they were accordingly invested into the said office. (N.B. Bro. Flight co^d not be prevailed upon to accept the office.)

1777 March 17—

Resolved that at our next Church Meeting a nomination be made of some of the Brethren out of whom two to be chosen on some future day to the office of Deacons to this Church.

April 21—

The follg. Brethren being proposed by one of the Members and seconded by another were nominated for two of them to be chosen to the office of Deacon, viz. :

1802 Nov. 8—

Resolved that it appears expedient to choose 3 persons to the office of Deacons in this Church. The follg. persons were put in nomination:

Bro. Burls	Bro. Hudson
B. Lepard	Coxhead
Medley	Chas. Robinson

Agreed to meet this day fortnight to elect 3 persons out of those nominated to fill the office of Deacon.

Nov. 22—

The Church proceeded to ballot for Deacons on casting up which the numbers were for:

Bro. Burls	98
B. Lepard	91
Hudson	89
Coxhead	63
Medley	34
Chas. Robinson	17

the three former were declared duly elected. Agreed to meet this day fortnight for prayer and setting apart the Brethren now elected to their office.

Dec. 6—

Agreeable to the Resolution of the last Meeting the Church met for prayer and the Brethren chosen to the office of Deacon were set apart by Prayer and laying on of Hands by our Pastor.

1823 March 17.

All that Jesus Began, by R. H. Copestake. (Independent Press, 7s. 6d.).

This is another book by, presumably, a younger writer, which attempts to give in non-technical language the results of modern Biblical scholarship in regard to the mission and message of Jesus and the beginnings of the Church. The book is divided into three parts—The Church's one foundation; The Church of the New Testament; The Message of the New Testament Church. It is clearly and simply written, and would serve as a useful introduction for those desirous of a fuller understanding of the New Testament. There are a number of statements in this book which give the impression of immaturity. Would Paul have ardently persecuted the early Church if he had merely "despised" it? (p. 69). What does the writer mean by describing Philip as being "of the type that receives independent guidance"? (p. 70). Were the first Christians baptized "as a sign of admission to the Church"? (p. 70). There are printing errors on pp. 20 and 81.

The Great Realities, by Samuel H. Miller. (Longmans, Green, 10s. 6d.).

The fact that this book has been printed in this country after being first published in the U.S.A. in 1955, where the writer is a Baptist minister, indicates something of its worth. It is a mature book, full of spiritual insight and picturesque language, showing evidence of wide reading, long experience, deep thought and a lively faith. The "great realities" dealt with are—Man, God, Prayer, Worship, Faith, Love and Peace. This is a book to buy, over which to linger and to which to return. It is fresh in its treatment, stimulating to mind and heart, and takes account of the thought and outlook of modern man.

L. J. MOON